

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 SAM-01 /083 W

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P 311345Z DEC 74

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3055

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USCINCEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 1010

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, ET

SUBJECT: ASMARA MEETINGS ON ERITREAN PROBLEM

REF A. ASMARA 1006 (NOTAL); B. ASMARA 1008 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: MEETING BETWEEN PMG DELEGATION AND LOCAL LEADERS CONTINUED ON 29 AND 30 DEC. AT END OF SUNDAY MEETING COMMITTEE OF 38 WAS CHOSEN FROM LOCAL DELEGATES TO CONTINUE DISCUSSION. PROPOSALS MADE ON SUNDAY INCLUDED: ESTABLISH DIRECT CONTACT BETWEEN PMG AND ELF/PLF, BRING THE ERITREAN PROBLEM TO AN INTERNATIONAL FORUM, CONDUCT A PLEBISCITE TO LEARN ERITREAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS ETHIOPIA FIRST, RELEASE OF ERITREAN POLITICAL PRISONERS, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ATROCITIES COMMITTED AND PAYMENT OF DAMAGES. END SUMMARY.

2. THE MEETING ON 29 DEC RAN FROM 1000 TO 1700 HRS. LOCAL DELE-
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GATES, SPEAKING WITHOUT FEAR, CONDEMNED INJUSTICES UNDER PREVIOUS

REGIME AND THE CONTINUATION OF THE INJUSTICES UNDER THE PMG. SEVERAL SPEAKERS SUBTLY BLAMED THE ARMED FORCES FOR LAST WEEK'S MURDERS, BEFORE DEMANDING THAT THE TROOPS RETURN TO THE BARRACKS. LOCAL LEADERS FREQUENTLY POINTED OUT THAT ERITREA CHOSE UNION WITH ETHIOPIA, SO THAT THE OPPRESSION OF ERITREA IS NOT JUSTIFIED.

3. COMMENT: THE FRANKNESS OF THE ERITREAN REPS AND THE FULL FRONT PAGE COVERAGE ON 29 AND 31 DEC IN IL QUOTIDIANO ERITREO (GOVERNMENT PAPER) OFFER HOPE FOR A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE ERITREAN PROBLEM. HOWEVER, THE LACK OF ANY MENTION OF THE MEETINGS IN THE ETHIOPIAN HERALD (ADDIS ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY) OF THE SAME DATES RAISES CONCERN OVER THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PMG DELEGATION. ACCORDING TO THE IL QUOTIDIANO REPORT THE PMG DELEGATES ALL SPOKE OF A SOLUTION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ETHIOPIA FIRST. LOCAL SOURCES REPORT THAT LOCAL REPS SHOWED LITTLE INTEREST IN SUCH A FRAMEWORK. THOSE REPS PROPOSING A RETURN TO FEDERATION WERE CHIDED BY THEIR COLLEAGUES. ERITREAN SOURCES HAVE LITTLE FAITH IN THE ABILITY OF THE PMG TO NEGOTIATE A SOLUTION ACCEPTABLE TO ERITREA.

4. COMMENT: A SOURCE OF UNKNOWN RELIABILITY REPORTS THAT THE ELF/PLF WILL MOVE AGAINST THE ARMY IF THE RESPONSE TO THE SIX DEMANDS (REF B) IS NOT SATISFACTORY. ANOTHER SOURCE REPORTED THAT SEVERAL HUNDRED ELF WERE SIGHTED ABOUT 40 KMS FROM ASMARA (15-27N, 38-45E) ON THEIR WAY TO ASMARA FROM KEREN. ANOTHER SOURCE REPORTS THAT THE ELF IS ACCUSING THE PLF OF BEING AMERICAN SUPPORTED. THE SAME SOURCE REPORTS THAT THE LOCAL ELF/PLF MAY NOT ACCEPT A SOLUTION NEGOTIATED WITH THE EXILED LEADERS. SEVERAL LOCAL BUSINESS SOURCES BELIEVE ETHIOPIAN ACCESS TO ERITREAN PORTS WILL BE GRANTED AFTER ERITREA BECOMES INDEPENDENT.
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